

SAFE METHOD:

# READY-TO-EAT FOOD



It is important to handle ready-to-eat food safely to protect it from harmful bacteria and allergens.

Ready-to-eat food is food that will not be cooked or reheated before serving. This includes salads, cooked meats, smoked fish, desserts, sandwiches, cheese and food that you have cooked in advance to serve cold.

SAFETY POINT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
<p>When preparing and handling food, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep ready-to-eat food completely separate from raw meat, poultry, fish, eggs and unwashed vegetables</li> <li>• make sure work surfaces, chopping boards, knives etc. are clean (and disinfected if you have prepared raw food)</li> <li>• ideally, use separate colour coded chopping boards and utensils for ready-to-eat food</li> <li>• keep ready-to-eat food covered at all times during preparation and storage.</li> </ul>	<p>This protects food from harmful bacteria and allergens. This is especially important for ready-to-eat food because it will not be cooked or reheated before serving.</p> <p>It also helps keep allergens from spreading.</p> 	<p>List the types of ready-to-eat food you use and how you handle them:</p>
<p>Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to store and prepare the food, if these are available.</p>	<p>The manufacturer's instructions are designed to keep the food safe.</p>	<p>Are you confident that you do this for all ready-to-eat food where instructions are available?</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>When preparing fruit, vegetables and salad ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• peel, trim, or remove the outer parts, as appropriate</li> <li>• wash them thoroughly by rubbing vigorously in a bowl of clean water</li> <li>• wash the cleanest ones first</li> </ul> <p>Wash your hands before and after handling fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>If you have prepared vegetables that have dirt or soil on the outside, clean and then disinfect chopping boards and work surfaces before preparing other food.</p>	<p>The dirt on vegetables and salad ingredients can contain harmful bacteria. Peeling and washing helps to remove the dirt and bacteria.</p>   	<p>Do you do this? Yes</p> <p>If not, what do you do?</p>



SAFETY POINT	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
<p>Make sure you keep ready-to-eat food cold enough. See 'Chilled storage and displaying chilled food' in the Chilling section.</p> <p>Do not use ready-to-eat food after the 'use by' date, if there is one.</p> <p>For food you have prepared, or removed from its original packaging, use stickers or another method to keep track of when food should be used by or thrown away.</p> <p>For guidance on how long to keep food once prepared or opened, follow manufacturer's storage instructions on the original product label. High risk ready-to-eat foods should be kept for a maximum of 3 days in total (day of cook/opening + 2) unless you have evidence that it is safe to keep them for longer. Cooked rice should only be kept for 1 day once prepared.</p>	<p>If these types of food are not kept cold enough, harmful bacteria could grow.</p> <p>You should never use food that has passed its 'use by' date because it might not be safe to eat.</p>	<p>Do you do this? Yes</p> <p>If not, what do you do?</p>
<p>If you slice cooked meat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow the manufacturer's instructions when you clean the slicer</li> <li>• avoid handling the meat as much as possible – use clean tongs or slice meat straight onto a plate</li> </ul>	<p>Meat slicers need careful cleaning and disinfecting to prevent dirt building up and to stop harmful bacteria growing, in particular on the slicing blade.</p> <p>Hands can easily spread harmful bacteria onto food.</p>	<p>Are staff trained how to clean the meat slicer properly, or supervised?</p> <p>Yes      No</p>

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG	HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you think that a food delivery has not been handled safely, reject the delivery.</li> <li>• If ready-to-eat vegetables, fruit or salad ingredients have not been washed properly, wash them following the advice on the first side of this Safe method and clean any work surfaces etc. they have touched.</li> <li>• If ready-to-eat food has been prepared on a work surface or with a knife that has been used for raw meat, poultry, fish, eggs or unwashed fruit and vegetables, throw the food away.</li> <li>• If ready-to-eat food has not been chilled safely, throw the food away.</li> <li>• If ready-to-eat food is past its use-by date, throw it away.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you do not think a supplier handles food safely, consider changing to a new supplier.</li> <li>• Review the way you receive deliveries.</li> <li>• Review the way you store and prepare ready-to-eat food.</li> <li>• Train staff again on this safe method.</li> <li>• Improve staff supervision.</li> </ul>

**THINK TWICE!**

You should not use the same equipment, such as vacuum packing machines, slicers and mincers, for both raw and ready-to-eat food. These are complex pieces of machinery with lots of moving parts and it is very difficult to clean them sufficiently, so bacteria from raw food could easily be transferred to ready-to-eat food.

If you are preparing both raw and ready-to-eat food, you should make sure where possible this is done in separate clean and disinfected areas. If this is not possible, surface and utensils used must be thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected between tasks.

Make sure staff wash their hands thoroughly between tasks, especially when working with raw and ready-to-eat food. This stops bacteria and allergens being spread onto foods, surfaces and equipment.

**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.**

